UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

*In Recital*

# BRUCE VOGT

## Pianist in Recital

**Monday, November 10, 1986 8:00 p.m.**

**PROGRAMME**

**Reminiscences de Norma** 1841

**Sposalizio** 1838, rev. 1850's
from "Années de Pèlerinage" Deuxième Année: Italie

**Après une Lecture de Dante** 1839, rev. 1849
fantasia quasi sonata
from "Années de Pèlerinage" Deuxième Année: Italie

**INTERVAL**

**Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude** 1847
from "Harmonies poétiques et religieuses"

**Variationen über das Motiv von Bach** 1862
"Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen"

**Elegie: Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth** 1843, rev. 1880

*Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building*

# PROGRAMME NOTES

## Reminiscences de "Norma"

In the nineteenth century, it was common for a piano virtuoso to include in his recital a fantasy on themes from a popular opera. Most of these fantasies were simply pot-pourris of melodies crudely strung together and decorated with impressive but empty embellishments. In 1841, Liszt wrote to Marie d'Agoult that he was "working like a madman", having discovered a new possibility for these works. The fantasies that Liszt created at this time - including those on Bellini's Norma and Mozart's Don Giovanni - demonstrate the dramatic potential of this genre, while maintaining an astonishing level of pianistic innovation.

## Sposalizio

This piece, written ca 1838-40 when Liszt was in Italy with Marie d'Agoult, takes its inspiration from Raphael's painting of the same name, depicting the marriage of the Virgin. The music, with its Impressionistic sonorities, offers a sensitive recreation of the mood of the painting - particularly in the evocations of bell sounds. Furthermore, through its presentation and eventual combination of themes and motives, it suggests a remarkable sense of musical perspective paralleling the visual perspectives of Raphael's canvas.

## Après une Lecture de Dante

The main title of this work refers to a poem of the same name by Victor Hugo. But the reference to Hugo's poem was a later addition. Liszt's composition was in fact inspired by Dante's Divine Comedy, a work he had known since the early 1830's. The first sketch of this composition - titled a "Fragment dantesque" - dates from 1839.

At the beginning of Dante's great epic, the poet finds himself at the midpoint of his life in a dark wood, having lost the "Path that does not stray" while pursuing worldly success. His subsequent journeys make redemption possible. This must have has enormous resonance for Liszt who, at the time he was composing this work, was also preparing to abandon his career as a concert virtuoso - a career he had come to despise - in order to establish a new cultural centre at Weimar.

The many allusions to Dante's Inferno give this composition a strange and compelling atmosphere. It is also one of Liszt's most original and cogent large-scale forms.

## Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude

Liszt's Franciscan Catholicism was a profound inspiration throughout his life, although some have seen an amusing contradiction in the zest with which he lived his secular life. But for Liszt there was no such contradiction: his religious feelings exerted a powerful influence over all his strivings. Indeed, his polemics on behalf of art and other artists and even his love letters typically were expressed in language of religious fervour and conviction.

This work is based on a poem by Lamartine which describes a mystical experience bringing to the poet a sense of harmony with the universe and a freedom from doubt and despair. In Humphry Searle's words:

> "[The music expresses] the feeling of mystical contemplation which Beethoven attained in his last period but which is rarely found elsewhere in music. The touching simplicity of the final passage shows that Liszt, like Beethoven, could express the most sublime thoughts in completely unadorned language."

## Variationen über das Motiv von Bach

Written after the death of Liszt's eldest daughter Blandine in 1862, this work uses the chromatically falling bass line from Bach's Cantata #12: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen sind der Christen Traenbrot ["Weeping, plaints, sorrows, fears are the Christian's lot"]. Liszt's variations - which might be better called a passacaglia - are remarkable for their concentrated expression of unrelenting grief, rage and despair.

The final section of Bach's Cantata is the chorale "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan"[What God does is for the best"]. In Liszt's work, this same chorale comes as a miraculous consolation after a dramatic buildup of almost unbearable chaos.

## Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth

Nonnenwerth is an island in the Rhine with a ruined monastery and a chapel which Liszt used as a retreat during the summers of the early 1840's.

The work originated as a setting of a poem about love abandoned with the monastery (Die Zelle) acting as a symbol of loss and death. Liszt subsequently wrote four versions for piano, and the metamorphosis over the years is extreme. Little is left of love abandoned: instead, there remains a sense of profound resignation with echoes of ghostly chanting and distant bells from the long deserted monastery.

Joan Backus and Bruce Vogt

## ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Bruce Vogt is one of Canada's most exciting and mature interpreters of the piano literature. His solo repertoire is immensely varied, and over the past few years, he has developed a special interest in the music of Franz Liszt,an interest which culminated in his recent all-Liszt concert debut in London, England.

An outstanding teacher as well as performer, Mr. Vogt is well known for the master classes and workshops he has given at Universities, schools, and in smaller communities. At present, he is an assistant professor of music at the University of Victoria

Mr. Vogt's teachers in Canada included Damjana Bratuz and Anton Kuerti. He also studied in England, Switzerland, Italy, and the U.S.A. His many recitals given across Canada and the United States include appearances at the National Arts Centre and the St. Lawrence Centre. He has performed with the orchestras of Montreal, Quebec City, Hamilton, London and Thunder Bay, and has made many tapes for CBC Radio.

A recording featuring an all Liszt programme will be released later this year.

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## Arts Building Renovations

Some inconveniences have arisen caused by the renovations of the Old Arts Building . Until further notice, wheelchair access and washroom facilities are unavailable in the Arts Building. Washrooms can be found in the Business Building located a short distance north east of the hall and also in Rutherford library, just southeast of the Arts Building.